

November report to constituents

Here is news of the **November 14 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At this meeting, the ANC:

- Authorized expenditures of up to \$250 for Internet Web site hosting, and \$200 for additional meeting microphones;
- Agreed to ask Councilmember Jim Graham cosponsor, with ANC1D, a public “summit” on Mount Pleasant traffic;
- Agreed to appropriate up to \$5000 of ANC funds for facilitation services in support of the “Mount Pleasant Traffic Summit”.

The election results are in (see table), and it looks like I’m on the hook for another two years. Why do I do this? Well, because I can make things just a little bit better around the neighborhood, such as the improvements to the intersection of Park Road and Walbridge/-Klinge, some no-parking signs moved to increase parking space, sidewalks better-looking than the standard gray, increased pedestrian-crossing time on 16th Street, wheelchair ramps at Lamont and 19th, a bench at the Irving/Kenyon bus stop and a safe passageway for pedestrians. I intend to continue to work for reform of our residential parking system, improved traffic patterns and pedestrian safety, more curbside parking space, and a business district that better serves the needs of Mount Pleasant residents.

| SMD | Candidate | Vote | Of total |
|------|----------------|------|----------|
| 1D01 | Jane Zara | 251 | 74% |
| 1D02 | Joe Esparza | 92 | 41% |
| 1D03 | *Jack McKay | 452 | 81% |
| 1D04 | *Gregg Edwards | 158 | 72% |
| 1D05 | Dave Bosserman | 388 | 74% |
| 1D06 | *Angelia Scott | 205 | 76% |

These are the ANC candidates elected to the 2007-2008 session, with the total number of votes for each, and the percentage of the total ballots cast in that district (including no-ANC-vote ballots). *Incumbent re-elected.

The ANC called for a “**Mount Pleasant Traffic Summit**”, to bring to the residents all DDOT plans for traffic routes, parking regulations, and bike lanes. It appears that there are plans in the works that have not been much advertised, such as the bike lanes, which have been decided upon with very little residential involvement. More significant may be changes to parking regulations, such as the bizarre notion that parking along many of our residential streets should be controlled by parking meters (from which residents would be exempt). This “Summit” would serve to publicize whatever plans are in the works, and I voted for that measure.

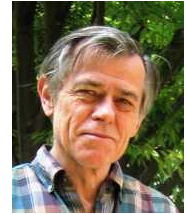
There is a formal traffic study on its way, delayed by difficulties in the identification of a contractor. We do need a systematic survey of our traffic problems, primarily the problem of heavy, speeding traffic on the cross-town routes that go through our neighborhood. I don’t know if this “Summit” would take place before, or after, the results of that study are in.

The ANC went on to authorize the expenditure of up to \$5000 for a “meeting facilitator” to run this meeting. That’s serious money, and I have to question whether this is a good use for that much taxpayer money. Will a “meeting facilitator” enhance the meeting to a value of \$5000? I am skeptical of that, and I voted against this authorization, but in the minority. So I guess we’ll find out in time if this is money well spent, or not.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #51

Jack McKay, November 28, 2006

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The next ANC meeting is on Tuesday, December 5, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. For an agenda, see <http://anc1d.org/>.

Growing old is not for the faint of heart, my father-in-law used to say, as he approached 90. A longtime Mount Pleasant resident is coping with the vicissitudes of old age, compounded by strokes, which now have her confined to the basement of her Walbridge Place home of 46 years, unable to manage the stairs. A hazard of basement living is the possibility of being trapped by fire, if that fire happens to block the only way out. This elderly couple recently requested permits to add a front exit to their basement home, with a ramp, so that this good lady could, if necessary, escape a fire.

Absolutely not, said the **Historic Preservation Office (HPO)**, their denial supported by a nine to one vote of the Historic Preservation Review Board. Building an exit ramp would require removing a portion of the front porch, and that would upset the pattern of “repeating porches of similar height and depth” along the row.

No doubt the HPO bureaucrats are simply doing their jobs according to the law, but I think this shows seriously misplaced priorities. Elderly or disabled residents ought to be able to live out their lives in their longtime homes, in comfort and in safety, and if safety requires compromising architectural styles, then so be it. The HPO decision implies that this resident must either leave her longtime home, or live in a fire trap, because they won’t permit any deviation from the “historic” architecture of the row. I object: if this resident needs a ramp to provide a safe emergency exit from her home, then she should have it. The personal safety of a resident ought to take precedence over architectural style.

Here's some great news: **our burglary rate has dropped sharply**, from 11 in July, 20 in August, and 11 in September, to just six in October, and only three through late November. The MPD assigned a special tactical squad to the problem, patrolling the neighborhood in plain clothes, and they did the job, arresting several men for burglary, or for possession of stolen goods. The band of burglars responsible for our wave of burglaries has evidently been broken up, thanks to effective police work focused on the problem. Police work focused on specific problems is effective at stopping crime; random patrols, officers wandering the neighborhood on undirected lookouts, are not. Our soon-to-be police chief, Cathy Lanier, is reported to be a strong advocate of such "targeted patrols".

I offered a resolution to the ANC commending the MPD for this admirable piece of work. Unfortunately, only Rich Wysocki showed any interest in this resolution, and the other commissioners would not even permit my motion to be brought up for discussion. Well, shame on them! I'm very pleased that our burglary wave is over, I'm impressed that the MPD took such quick and effective action, so I offer my public commendation and gratitude to our police officers for their fine work.

Concerning **bike lanes**, I was informed that the 2000 block of Park Road (and only that block) is designated by DDOT to have bicycle lanes, according to the Bicycle Master Plan, issued in April, 2005. This decision came as a surprise to me, and to most residents, too. Entirely aside from the questionable value of bike lanes on this one block, bracketed east and west by exceptionally bicycle-hostile roads, it is clear that the neighborhood was neither advised nor consulted concerning this decision. DDOT claims that there was "a fairly extensive public involvement process including a meeting in Mt Pleasant for Ward 1 issues", but the only public involvement I can find was a "bike ride and bicycle workshop" in June, 2003, in Columbia Heights. The DC Bicycle Master Plan was issued in April, 2005, with no advice to the ANC, much less to Mount Pleasant residents, of its existence or contents. An "extensive public involvement process", this is not.

One example of our trouble with **speeding traffic** on our neighborhood "through" streets is the 2000 block of Park Road, the last block of Park Road between the Walbridge/Klinge intersection and the bridge into Rock Creek Park. Park Road widens at that point, from traffic lanes 22 feet wide east of this intersection, to 29 feet wide to the west, going down the hill into Rock Creek Park. Westbound drivers, seeing the road widen, accelerate to highway speeds. Eastbound drivers emerging from Rock Creek Park see not a "residential" street but a wide "cross-town arterial", and come into our neighborhood at excessive speed. I've measured speeds along that block, and I found that the eastbound traffic has an "85th percentile" speed of 40 mph, meaning that 15% of the cars are moving at that speed or higher. Too fast!

Residents park their cars along the west side of that block of Park Road, and then must run across the street to their homes, directly across that speeding traffic. (I would readily stop to let residents cross, but I'm afraid to stop my car on that road, fearing being rear-ended.) Residents cannot be expected to walk from their cars up to the Walbridge/Klinge intersection (in the street, there being no sidewalk!), cross at the light, and walk back. We must find a way to make crossing that street safe, especially after dark. I have suggested a crosswalk at the bottom of the hill, at the bridge, with a pedestrian-crossing warning light, giving drivers emerging from Rock Creek Park an unmistakable signal to slow down because they're entering a residential neighborhood.

Councilmember Jim Graham has ordered DDOT to paint bicycle lanes on this block, not for the benefit of bicyclists, but for the specific purpose of slowing traffic. I objected, much to the Councilmember's irritation, not because I have any problem with bike lanes - I'm a serious bicyclist, with over 2500 miles on my bike so far this year, some of those miles on this block of Park Road - but because bike lanes will do nothing to make crossing Park Road safe, and because of the arbitrary manner in which this decision was made.

There exists a formal DDOT process for doing traffic calming, including advice from traffic engineers, consultation with nearby residents, and advice to the ANC. All this has been bypassed. No traffic engineers have recommended bike lanes for slowing traffic on this road. The neighborhood has not been consulted, to see if they agree with this approach to the problem. The ANC has not agreed that bike lanes are the best means of slowing traffic. The logic seems to be that bike lanes are planned for this location anyway (see item above), and they might do a tiny bit of good, so let's rush them in right now, and skip all the proper traffic calming procedures.

These bike lanes will not slow traffic by any useful amount. Irving Street was given a painted bike lane for traffic calming in 2003, but residents still complain of excessive traffic speed. Evidence elsewhere is that traffic may slow by just a few mph, but that's hardly enough to make the road pedestrian-safe. Nor will bike lanes, on one isolated block of Park Road, be of much use to bicyclists.

I offered a resolution at this month's ANC meeting calling for DDOT "to follow the procedures of the Transportation Audit Guidelines in the determination of a traffic calming method" for this block. This resolution simply reinforced this ANC's July 2005 advice to DDOT to respect its own traffic calming procedures, and said nothing about bike lanes. The ANC failed to support that resolution, unwilling to stand up for its own advice that traffic calming measures be undertaken by a disciplined and orderly process, instead of by an elected official's decree. So the bike lanes will come, any day now.

We need to make this block of Park Road truly pedestrian-safe. Bike lanes won't do it, so let's find a way that will.